1:Murphy and Quain E-4,5 (1938) 1955
SP23 Trumai SP23

The rapid exhaustion of the soil forces them into a life which, although not nomadic, involves frequent moves. As the soil in old plots is exhausted, new ones have to be opened up. The area of exploitable land around the village is limited by the need to transport the produce and protect the villagers from their enemies. Thus, after the land available to the village has been used, the group moves.

The main subsistence of the nine village groups now living in the upper Xingú area is derived from this typically Amazonian shifting horticulture coupled with fishing in the extensive streams, lagoons, and estuaries. Apparently, the population of the region was never great enough to cause any pressure on land or other resources. Each village maintained exclusive rights of exploitation over certain waterways and areas of land within which the village always moved. There evidently were not, and still are not, any clearly defined territorial boundaries; but village rights are implicitly recognized.

The Neighbors of the Trumaí

Although there is considerable uniformity in the cultures of the upper Xingú tribes, their linguistic affiliations are diverse. The main language stocks of aboriginal Brazil are represented. On the Kuluene River are the linguistically independent Trumaí and the Cariban Kuikuru, Kalapalo, Tsuva, and Naravute. Near the waters of the Kuliseu River live the Tupian Kamayurá and Auetí, the Arawakan Mehinaku and Yaulapití, and the Cariban Nahukwa. The Batoví River is inhabited by the Arawakan Waurá and Kustenaú.[1] All these villages maintain a rather distrustful peace among themselves, but live in fear of their hostile Gê- and Tupian-speaking neighbors on the perimeters of the upper Xingú drainage area.

The upper Xingú "tribes" consist of one village each. It seems evident from the linguistic heterogeneity of the region that it is a *cul de sac* — one of the aboriginal refuge areas which characterize the cultural landscape of the headwaters of the Amazon and its tributaries.

The cultural uniformity of the above peoples has impressed all observers, as has the extensive contact that they maintain with each other. Descriptions of this homogeneity are to be found in von den Steinen[2] and, latterly, in Galvão[3] and Oberg.[4] Among the principal material traits which distinguish the area as opposed to neighboring, but outside, groups are: haystack-shaped houses arranged in a circle around a central plaza; bark canoes; dependence upon fish for protein;

[1] Oberg (1953, p. 4) states that the Yaulapití, Kustenaú, Tsuva, and Naravute no longer live in independent villages, but reside among other groups, usually of the same linguistic family.

[2] Von den Steinen 1888. [3] Galvão 1949. [4] Oberg 1953.

1:Murphy and Quain E-4,5 (1938) 1955
SP23 Trumai SP23

The fishing grounds and the still productive fruit trees of the old villages were considered to be the domain of the Trumaí, and these rights were apparently respected by others. When the village moved in search of new land, it was usually to one of the old sites, whose name the new village would take.

The Trumaí were once feared by the other tribes of the upper Xingú and were evidently a relatively numerous and vigorous people. However, when Quain visited them in 1938, they numbered only 43, and only ten years later, in 1948, the population had shrunken to a meagre 25.[11] Their small numbers had forced them to abandon village life once since Quain's visit, but they subsequently reunited in a new community.[11a]

Warfare

The topography of the flat upper Xingú Basin encourages considerable contact between tribes. The waterways are extensive and have importance beyond subsistence, as they are the chief avenues of trade and warfare. Communication through the river and flood plain system is the main reason for the high degree of cultural homogeneity that has been achieved by these tribes of diverse origins and languages. Intertribal relations are not confined to trade and warfare, but enter the spheres of social organization, ceremonialism and mythology.

Intertribal bonds within the upper Xingú Basin were based on peaceful relations between the tribes. These tribes formed part of a bounded social system in which groups outside the area did not take part. The Bakairí Indians of the Paranatinga River were on a friendly basis with the headwaters groups only because they had once lived on the Batoví River. Other tribes were uniformly enemies, regardless of cultural or linguistic affinities. Despite this peaceful interaction among the upper Xingú villages, there was considerable mutual fear and hostility between them which was expressed in witchcraft, petty thievery and intimidation. The practice of sorcery upon other villages is especially significant, in that sorcery is used in nearly all cultures only between people who share close interpersonal ties. This illustrates better than anything else the high degree of intervillage integration in the upper Xingú River Basin. The component groups constitute far more than a culture area — they form a society.

Despite the nominal peace within the upper Xingú area, the Trumaí lived in dread of their neighbors, and with good reason.[12] Situated

[11] Oberg 1953, p. 4.

[11a] Latest reports state that a measles epidemic has wrought great havoc, and that the few survivors have all joined other groups.

[12] Although fear of neighboring groups is general in the upper Xingú, de Lima (1949, p. 28) noted it to be especially strong among the numerically weak Trumaí.

1:Murphy and Quain E-4,5 (1938) 1955
SP23 Trumai SP23

The plaza was the center of Trumaí social life. Here guests were entertained, ceremonials and wrestling matches were held, and the men gathered daily. Although the women might sit in front of their houses and watch these activities, they were not allowed to come near the log bench, even when the men were not there. The plaza of the Trumaí village was also used as the burying ground.

A short distance north of the circle of houses, on the path to the two main garden clearings of the Trumaí, was another smaller clearing used during the *ole*, or manioc, ceremonies. Other paths radiated outward from the village to the other gardens and to nearby groves of *piquí* trees. Quain noticed that the paths leading to the Kamayurá village were much broader and cleaner. The Kamayurá were proud of their paths and kept them in good condition. Their plaza was also clearer of weeds and trash than that of the Trumaí.

Of the four completed houses in the village, two were as large as those of the Kamayurá, but the other two, which were much smaller, were considered by Quain's informants to be genuinely Trumaí in type. Insofar as is known, the details of the construction and shape of all four were substantially the same. They had an elliptical floor plan and were haystack-shaped. Although the side walls were only four feet high, the roof attained a height of fifteen feet. The silhouette of the house was an almost smooth curve from ridge pole to ground. The frame was covered with a grass thatch. There were no windows, and a single entry opened on the plaza.

Each family occupied its own section of the house and had its own fireplace. Personal belongings hung from the walls and ceilings or were placed on small shelves. Hammocks were hung between the side wall posts and the two center posts, the woman's hammock beneath that of her husband. Except for two nuclear families that screened off their sections with blankets and cloth given them by Quain, there was no internal division of the house.

The two largest garden clearings were situated respectively about one mile northeast and one mile northwest of the village. Three small ones were located southeast of the settlement. In order of size, the gardens were named Nariatan, Waniwanitan, Anariatan, Tan Toreake, and Tandatake. Nariatan, the largest, contained, by Quain's rough calculation, approximately seven acres divided into ten plots, representing the gardens of seven men. One plot contained two acres, but the average garden varied between one-fourth and one acre in size. One of the men had erected a temporary thatch shelter in his plot, providing protection from the sun, but not from the rain. Inside there was only a basket of manioc flour, a rack for cooking fish, and a large shallow pot into which manioc was grated. This was the sole garden shelter Quain saw, and, significantly, it belonged to the most industrious horticulturist in the village.

1:Murphy and Quain E-4,5 (1938) 1955
SP23 Trumai SP23

The path which led from the village to Naristan, the northwestern garden clearing, passed through the previously mentioned ceremonial clearing north of the village. A short distance beyond this point, a branch took off to the east and led to Waniwanitan, the northeastern and second largest clearing, which contained nine garden plots totaling approximately five acres. Each garden was tilled by a different man, but two men had plots in both Naristan and Waniwanitan. The size of the average garden was one-half acre. There was no newly cleared land, and, in contrast to Naristan which was still yielding, nearly all of the crop (mostly manioc) had either died or been harvested. Quain noticed that the soil in Naristan had a gray tone, whereas that of Waniwanitan was reddish in hue. This difference in color was due to the ashes deposited by the more recent burning over of the former site.

Naristan was a newer garden than Waniwanitan, and the former was planted to a variety of crops while the latter was nearly all in manioc. This is indicative of the common tropical forest slash and burn system whereby second year gardens are used only for manioc growing, and new areas in which the soil is still comparatively rich are used for other vegetables in addition to manioc. The Trumaí are unique, however, in that the garden clearing was divided into individually owned plots. Smaller individual gardens or large gardens cleared and cultivated collectively are the general rule in the rain forests of South America.

The three other clearings were small, and each contained one garden plot. One was one-quarter acre in size, while the other two each comprised one-half acre. These small gardens were connected with the village by separate paths and were closer to it than the two larger clearings. Anaristan, Naristan and Waniwanitan were named after old village sites, but Quain knew of no abandoned locations from which the names Tan Toreake and Tandatake could have been derived.

Horticultural Techniques

It is difficult to assess the relative importance of horticulture, fishing and gathering in the subsistence economy of the Trumaí. At different times of the year each made the major contribution to the diet. Most garden products became available at about the middle of the rainy season, but manioc was dug up when needed throughout the year. Fish and manioc were staples the year-round, although fishing was poorer during the rains. Each was more important in the total diet than were the products of gathering. However, the subsistence of the Trumaí at certain times of the year, especially in the early part of the rainy season, would have been seriously threatened without the wild foods.

The agricultural cycle started in the early part of the dry season when the clearings needed for the next rainy season's gardens were made.

1:Murphy and Quain E-4,5 (1938) 1955
SP23 Trumai SP23

The usual procedure was for each man to clear a garden plot adjacent to the others; in this way the two large clearings of Naristan and Waniwanitan were created. The three isolated small clearings might have been nuclei for future large clearings.

All the trees in the plot to be cleared were felled, and the underbrush was slashed away. This has been done with steel axes since the upper Xingú Indians came in contact with the outside world. Quain noted that much more work must have been involved in clearing the forest when stone axes were used. Even with improved implements, clearing land was the most arduous work done by the Trumaí. Stumps were not uprooted, nor were the fallen trees and shrubs removed. The dead vegetation was allowed to dry, and the plot was burned over just before planting in September. When planting, the Trumaí followed the simple expedient of avoiding burned tree trunks and stumps. One year old garden plots were made ready for replanting simply by pulling out or chopping down weeds.

The heavy work of clearing the land fell to the men. In one case reported by Quain, two men from the same household cleared a plot jointly, but in all other instances each garden was cleared by one man.

Permanent rights to land resided in the community as a whole, but gardens were spoken of as belonging to the man who had cleared the land. He also had proprietary rights over the crops, even when he had not planted them himself. Generally, however, such fine points of property were not an issue, as the man who cleared the land usually planted it. Land tenure was a function of use only.

Absolute, permanent ownership of property in land would have had no purpose, as the gardens were temporary and were abandoned when the soil was exhausted after two consecutive plantings.

The planting season began after the first light rains and lasted from about the middle of September to about the second week in October. The first heavy daytime rains arrive at the beginning of October and become more frequent throughout the month. Thus the sowing was done after the earth was moistened, but before the rains arrived in full force.

Quain made note of a variety of food plants growing in the Trumaí gardens. These included bitter manioc (*ole*), corn (*xotet*), squash, large beans (*kumaa*), small beans (*kumaa'i*), sweet potatoes (*mani*), sugar cane (*kuweiya*), a species of pineapple (*wasus ruyus*), and banana trees (*tsi tlatlat*). Among the domesticated non-food plants were tobacco, cotton (*awandyu*), the castor bean (*patasy*), and *urucú* (*matdot*). Quain believed that the castor bean was used for the round hollow point of the whistling arrow, but Oberg says that the Kamayurá make theirs with hollow nuts of the tucúm palm.[1] *Urucú* is a plant bearing a pod, the

[1] Oberg 1953, p. 21.

1:Murphy and Quain E-4,5 (1938) 1955
SP23 Trumai SP23

although not everyone owned one. Quain also described Trumaí fish nets, but netting must have been a minor technique, as he did not see it practiced during his stay.

Throughout the upper Xingú area it was common practice to construct fish dams across the mouths of lagoons. There were two such fish weirs in the Trumaí lagoon, one near its mouth, the other across a small inlet near the village. Their purpose was to block the fish from escape to the main stream when drugs were placed in the water. They were built by driving upright stakes into the floor of the lagoon, after which a wall of rubbish and branches was built against the fence. One dam was constructed by the village cooperatively, while the other was said to have been built by a single man.

The Trumaí lagoon was considered the property of the community, and the Trumaí maintained exclusive fishing rights in it. The water in the lagoon is clear in comparison to the muddy Kuluene, and the fishing excellent. A good proportion of the fishing was done there, especially when traps and poisons were used, but they also had fishing rights in other lagoons within the territory of abandoned Trumaí villages. In addition, they fished in the Kuluene and Kuliseu and ranged as far afield as the Batovi River.

While most fishing trips were carried out within a day, some lasted two or three days. When the fishermen returned, they were greeted with a conventional shout by all the villagers. The shout was meant to welcome the food rather than the fishermen, and similar cries were heard when well laden gathering parties returned from a short jaunt into the forest.

About one-half of the men owned canoes, and according to Quain's informants, only six did not know how to build them. The bark canoes of the upper Xingú are not difficult to make, and it can be assumed that the community did not need more, inasmuch as fishing parties always consisted of two men. Larger groups went out of the village in a body when many fish were needed for a ceremony or to feed guests, but they usually split into pairs. Cooperative fishing groups of more than two men were needed only for drugging and perhaps for netting. On one *tawasi* fishing expedition over half the males of the village went to the lagoon with bundles of shredded bark. Quain noted that this was one of the few examples of group labor transcending the immediate family.

Two-man fishing expeditions were composed of the owner or borrower of the canoe and his helper (*tau*). The *tau* generally paddled while the owner fished. Only while serving as a helper was he referred to as the *tau* of that man. Thus, if a person went as the helper of Makurawa, he was referred to as "Makurawatau." He shared in the catch, but whether he received less than the canoe owner is not indicated by the field notes. There seemed to be no fixed standard for the selection of the *tau*, nor

1:Murphy and Quain E-4,5 (1938) 1955
SP23 Trumai SP23

were the teams always the same. Old Matiwana and his son Yati fished together most of the time, as did Aloari and his true brother Tun. Other true brothers often fished together, but, with the exception of the two above-mentioned steadfast teams, men chose their fishing companions according to their mutual needs or plans for the day. Since such agreements occurred most often between members of the same household, co-residents often cooperated. One man, Jakuma, spent much of his time fishing as the *tau* of different canoe owners or borrowers. He had no wife, and his garden, which he did not till very diligently, was very small. His fishing partners included men from every household, who were related to him in various degrees.

Although the position of *tau* was a temporarily subordinate one, it caused no loss of status. Even the Trumaí chief, since he owned no canoe, went fishing as a *tau*. Occasionally men took their wives along, but fishing was a man's specialty, and the woman's function was restricted to paddling.

Gathering

The two most important food products that the Trumaí gathered were turtle eggs and the fruit of the *piquí* tree, or *tsinon*. Throughout the dry season, turtle eggs were gathered in great quantity on the banks and sandbars of the rivers. By September they were no longer available and, in the following month, *piquí* became the main objective of the gathering parties. The harvest of this fruit was stored and lasted nearly to the end of the rainy season. *Piquí* was an important staple, especially in the period before crops ripened. Most of the *piquí* trees grow wild, but there is a suggestion in Quain's notes that they might also have been transplanted when young. All of the *piquí* trees were individually owned, and proprietary rights of individuals to groups of trees were clearly understood by all. In order to make the fruit ripen fast, the owner of the trees built a slow-burning fire of grass underneath them at night. The early rainy season was a rather lean period, so that there was great joy when the *piquí* was heard falling in the forest. Everyone broke into shouts of "*kaha kaha kaha-a-a*," which was the conventional cry for greeting the first *piquí*. These shouts were slightly different from those welcoming fish brought into the village.

The first fruit was usually gathered by the owner of the trees and his family. However, when the fruit began to fall in great quantity there was a general harvest which was shared without regard for tree ownership.

Piquí gathering started in the middle of October, when the planting season had ended and the men were free to help in the gathering. However, men still fished frequently, and the burden of the gathering fell on the women and older boys. Women from the same household

1:Murphy and Quain E-4,5 (1938) 1955
SP23 Trumaí SP23

CHAPTER THREE

Trumaí Social Organization

Property Ownership

Trumaí society was relatively simple. There was no social stratification based on wealth, nor were the mechanisms of social control and cohesion highly developed. This was in accord with the individualization of productive effort and the low level of economic surplus. The political unit was a single community, the sole bearer of Trumaí culture.

All land and productive resources were considered the property of the community, and the right to their exploitation resided with any individual willing to expend the labor. Gardens were individual property, but only in the sense that the man who reclaimed the land from the jungle was entitled to its product. There was no concept of alienable property in land, entailing the right of disposition. The *piquí* trees were said to be owned individually, but the owner exercised exclusive rights only over the first fruits. Other wild food plants were community property and their fruits belonged to the gatherer.

The fishing rights to lagoons and backwaters of the rivers belonged to the tribes in whose territory they were located. There was no individual ownership of fishing sites.

There was property in foods, but as soon as they were cooked they were freely distributed. *Beijú* belonged to the women, but the manioc out of which it was prepared was said to be the property of the man who grew it. Such distinctions were largely academic. Actually, the men grew the vegetable and the women harvested it, prepared it, and cooked it, after which it was distributed and eaten. The same situation prevailed in regard to the products of fishing, hunting, and gathering. Salt was the only exception, as it was prepared and owned by individual men and women. The difference undoubtedly lies in the fact that salt was an important trade item, while the other commodities were not.

Very little property can be said to have belonged to the family. Baskets and gourd containers were made by the men for themselves and for the women, but they were often used by both a man and his wife. Nearly all material objects outside of natural resources were owned by the person who made them or the person to whom an object was given. House ownership was vague, since houses were built and occupied by more than one man, and abandoned when the village moved. The house, however, was often considered the property of the man who put

1:Murphy and Quain E-4,5 (1938) 1955
SP23 Trumai SP23

the greatest time and effort into its building. Quain was reprimanded for speaking of the house in which Maibu lived as "Maibu's," for his brother-in-law, Mata'wai, had built it. This point of property was confirmed by others, despite the fact that Maibu was the head of the household and acted as host when guests entered. 423

To the Trumaí, the only important property was in the personal possession of transportable, material artifacts. These ranged from tools and weapons to ceremonial objects and trinkets obtained from Quain. The second class of property was probably cherished more than the first, which was viewed as consisting of everyday necessities. The combs, feathers, beads, European novelties, papers, and other such items that all men and women possessed were carefully kept in baskets and gourds near their hammocks. A man and wife would often keep some of their personal belongings in the same containers, but beyond this there was a special category of personal possessions called *wacta*. This highly valued personal property was kept by each individual in separate gourds, where it was safe from the gift claims of kinsmen and reasonably free from the danger of theft. 422 [415]

The privacy of this property was especially observed by opposite sexes, although not as strictly by mates. Quain was told by one man that it was "bad" for a man to look at a woman's *wacta*, although he rummaged at will through the personal belongings of the men. The taboo on male contact with women's *wacta* was due in part to inclusion within it of articles used during menstruation. [841]

Accompanying the stress on personal and private ownership of certain material objects was a strong sense of acquisitiveness. Quain expressed this as follows: "There can be no doubt that property ownership is a paramount drive in this culture. Children are not content to see, as they are in Fiji, but things must be theirs. The possessive pronoun has an importance here which is striking. Once articles are received, they seem to disappear. They are probably carefully guarded among personal belongings." Significantly, the word for "gift-giving," literally translated, also means "to yield to a demand." 181 425 [193]

The Trumaí were tremendously interested in Quain's belongings and made continual attempts to acquire them. Adults as well as children whined in order to obtain objects from him. This attitude was manifested towards useful objects such as knives and axes, but they also pleaded and begged for articles having only curiosity value to them. As Quain said, to be curious about an object was to want it. Possession was desired for its own sake, for only slight prestige was gained by accumulating material objects, and utilitarian articles, such as knives, axes, and pots, were easily borrowed. 123 181 425 [454] [556]

Despite the possessiveness described by Quain, the Trumaí were restricted by strong gift-giving ties. A true brother or a son had a claim 431 602